

Going Underground

'Catacomb Revisionists' and Revisionist Repression

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INTRODUCTION

For many, the phrase "going underground" conjures up images of anti-establishment sub-cultures. Oftentimes, we think of groups or individuals "going underground" when their thoughts or ideas have resulted in persecution in mainstream society. Fyodor Dostoevsky utilized the term in his story "Notes from Underground," his all-out assault on Enlightenment rationalism. Others may think of the "Underground Railroad," the clandestine routes that slaves used throughout the nineteenth century to escape to "free states" in the northern United States.

The earliest images that come to mind for most people however, date back nearly two thousand years to early Christian culture in ancient Rome. Christian belief in bodily resurrection resulted in their desire to bury their dead. These early underground burial sites became known as the 'Catacombs.' Since Roman law prohibited burials inside the city limits, Christians devised their underground burial places right outside the city limits. The catacombs were used both as burial places and for memorial services.^[1]

Popular culture often depicts the catacombs as secret hiding places for Christians throughout the long period of their persecution by Roman authorities. Today historians largely disagree with this portrayal of the catacombs.^[2] It is this popular image however, that resulted in Walter Lüftl's coining of the phrase "Catacomb Revisionists."^[3] In a letter to the editor of *The Revisionist*, Lüftl wrote:

"There you can see how we can create proselyte revisionists, or how they come into being, and be it by pure coincidence! I call them 'catacomb revisionists,' because like the early Christians in Rome, they, too, can survive only in catacombs [...] You will not believe how many people I already have converted into catacomb revisionists over a nice glass of wine. But when they want to spread the knowledge they gained after they started to learn more following their conversion, they all subsequently encounter problems in their families and social circles, because most people cannot distinguish between 'belief and facts.'"^[4]

Today revisionist historians who refute or even dare to question the established orthodoxy of the official Holocaust story find themselves persecuted and imprisoned throughout the world. The persecution has not prevented revisionists from writing, publishing, and speaking on these matters, but has largely driven them "underground" or turned them into "catacomb revisionists." Many newcomers to revisionism, for fear of backlash and persecution, have taken to the use of pseudonyms in their writing. In some cases, even established revisionists have utilized this age-old tactic to avoid both governmental and non-governmental repression for having expressed their viewpoint with regard to this one historical period.

EARLY HISTORY

Holocaust revisionism has had a long and distinguished history of the use of pseudonyms or *noms des plumes* by its authors. Three early titles were written by Josef Ginsburg using the pseudonym J.G. Burg.

These included *Schuld und Schicksal* (Guilt and Destiny), 1962, *Suendenboecke* (Scapegoats), 1967, and *NS-Verbrechen* (National Socialist Crimes), 1968. Ginsburg, a Jewish author, had been deported during the war by the Nazis. Presumably Ginsburg used this pseudonym to protect both himself and his family.[\[5\]](#)

One of the earliest English language revisionist books that addressed the Holocaust story was *The Myth of the Six Million*. This title originally appeared in 1969. Its author was identified simply as "anonymous."[\[6\]](#) Today it is known that this book was written by David L. Hoggan, an academic who taught at the University of California at Berkeley, San Francisco State College and several other schools of higher learning.[\[7\]](#) The Noontide Press published Hoggan's study anonymously purportedly to avoid academic retribution against Hoggan.[\[8\]](#)

In 1974, the highly influential booklet, *Did Six Million Really Die?* was published under the pen name Richard Harwood. The booklet has since had its author identified as Richard Verrall. The pseudonym "Harwood" was later used by several different authors including David McCalden and Ditlieb Felderer.[\[9\]](#) McCalden, who became the first director of the Institute for Historical Review, frequently used the pen name Lewis Brandon.[\[10\]](#) During Ernst Zündel's 1988 trial for having published *Did Six Million Really Die?*, Bradley Smith, founder and director of the Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust (CODOH), pointed out that it was sometimes necessary to use pen names because of the violence directed at one simply for expressing doubt about the bona fides of a historical event.[\[11\]](#)

Ditlieb Felderer would also publish an early revisionist book, *Auschwitz Exit*, using the pen name Abraham Cohen. Felderer claimed that he used the pen name in order to gain entry to various communist countries in order to conduct research and that use of his real name would result in denial of entry. Felderer's concerns appear to have been justified. In 1981, he was imprisoned by the government of Poland.[\[12\]](#)

It is clear that revisionists have used pseudonyms from their earliest days. Pseudonyms were the logical result of real threats that ranged from governmental repression to mob violence. In an effort to protect themselves, their careers and even their loved ones, revisionists frequently resorted to various pen names. This was not a matter of "intellectual dishonesty" as some anti-revisionists have charged but rather a means to avoid persecution.

CRITIQUES

The use of pseudonyms by revisionists has been frequently condemned by its detractors. Deborah Lipstadt used her typical derogatory tone with regard to pseudonyms throughout her *Denying the Holocaust*. She took aim at Richard Harwood and the original claim that he was with the University of London. For Lipstadt, the attempts to "camouflage" Harwood's identity was a matter of hiding his association with the British National Front.[\[13\]](#)

Perhaps the most-read critique of revisionist use of pseudonyms is that of Harry Mazal of the Holocaust History Project, an anti-revisionist group that functions primarily on the Internet. Mazal mainly targeted Germar Rudolf, for what Mazal calls his "continuing attempt to obfuscate and confuse." Mazal writes, "Mr. Rudolf, like many other Holocaust deniers, has created a variety of pseudonyms, referred to as nyms in common Internet parlance. Most deniers use such pseudonyms to conceal their identities in the various Usenet discussion groups."[\[14\]](#)

Mazal may not go as far as Lipstadt in attributing sinister intentions to revisionists, but clearly he believes that the use of nym as he calls them are all about creating confusion and covering up true identities. He also takes a shot at Samuel Crowell complaining, "Some, like "Samuel Crowell" use a nym to avoid embarrassment in their legitimate work place."[\[15\]](#) Still, Mazal refuses to address why revisionists should be "embarrassed" in their work place and even further who might cause them "embarrassment." Beyond "embarrassment," many revisionists have lost careers due to their revisionist activities.[\[16\]](#)

Some revisionists also have criticized the use of pseudonyms and pen names. Despite the long tradition of their use, various revisionists who are open about their work and viewpoints have sometimes expressed distaste at those who prefer pseudonyms. To the open revisionist, the use of a pseudonym can diminish the trust and confidence they are willing to place in the "underground" revisionist." Mark Weber, while editor of the *Journal of Historical Review*, was often reluctant to publish works submitted under pen names. David Irving also has made various comments through the years targeted at those who prefer to remain in the shadows. This position is certainly more understandable from those who like Irving have lost everything and even suffered imprisonment for their battle for revisionism than from the anti-revisionists who hypocritically denounce the use of pseudonyms and applaud the repression of those who express doubt about the Holocaust.

ANTI-REVISIONIST LEGISLATION

Although revisionists feared reprisal even dating back to the early 1960s, persecution and governmental repression have become a growing threat largely since the 1980s. In a short article, an anonymous revisionist author summed up the situation,

"By the 1980s there had arisen a powerful movement among mainstream Holocaust scholars, Jewish organizations, and politicians in Europe and Canada to actually criminalize dissent regarding the popular version of the Holocaust. Whereas only the United States was insulated from such censorship attempts because of a constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech, it had been assumed by many that the rest of the countries of the Western world, while lacking such a free-speech guarantee, nonetheless supported the notion of intellectual freedom, i.e. the principle that no one should be persecuted by their government for the "crime" of writing or reading unpopular material."[\[17\]](#)

The writer goes on to report,

"[...] by the year 1996 the only European nation to lack some kind of an "anti-revisionist" law would be Denmark, a small victory for revisionism rendered moot by a European Common Market regulation that enables a citizen of one European country to sue the citizen of any other for an offense that may only be an offense in the first country. By 1996, Canada, Australia, South Africa, and Mexico would have all persecuted Holocaust revisionists by law."[\[18\]](#)

With each passing year, the number of countries that outlawed Holocaust revisionism grew. France's repressive *Loi Gayssot* was enacted on July 13, 1990. The Swiss voted their anti-revisionist law into effect in September, 1994. Germany would join suit in the autumn of 1994 making it a criminal offense to "deny or trivialize any act committed under National Socialist rule."[\[19\]](#) Belgium would pass their Negationism Law in March, 1995. Other countries were soon to follow. As the governments of Europe enacted what would amount to "thoughtcrimes" legislation against revisionists at the request of various

Jewish activist organizations, revisionists were further driven underground.^[20] This drive to outlaw revisionism had the side effect of even greater use of pseudonyms in the 1990s and the years that followed.

THE INTERNET AGE

Although the result of a long history, the Internet largely went public in the 1990s. Revisionists were there from the start. In August 1991, Dan Gannon began his BBS (bulletin-board service) "Banished CPU."^[21] Throughout 1992, a heated debate on the Holocaust controversy raged on discussion forums on the GEnie and Prodigy systems.^[22] The most important discussions, however, began taking place on the Usenet newsgroup alt.revisionism.

The Internet became a principal driving force in the use of various identities by revisionists. Email addresses were typically created with something other than the individual's full name. Likewise, "handles" on newsgroups including alt.revisionism were often creative and typically masked one's true identity. Revisionists as well as anti-revisionists, and just about anyone else who wandered into any newsgroup now had an ID other than their given name.

At times, revisionists were forthright in identifying themselves, only to find their private information catalogued and distributed. As harassment increased, the drive to greater anonymity increased as well.

GERMAR RUDOLF

Germar Rudolf entered the revisionist scene in 1992 right as Europe was enacting tougher anti-revisionist legislation and the Internet was becoming a household word. Rudolf, it can be said, raised the use of pseudonyms to an art-form. Rudolf, however has been attacked more for his use of pseudonyms than any other revisionist.



Revisionist Germar Ruolf utilized several pseudonyms to avoid persecution and prosecution for writing and publishing scholarly books. Photo: www.codoh.com

Due to Rudolf's expertise as a chemist, he found himself being called by several defense lawyers to be an expert witness in trials against revisionists in Germany. These included trials against Udo Walendy (February 1992), Gerd Honsik (March 1992), David Irving (May 1992), Max Wahl (July 1992). Rudolf found that in these and other trials that the judges rejected any and all evidence presented by the defense, including that of expert witnesses. He writes:

"In one case, I had to learn that a chemist (me) was rejected because he was neither a toxicologist nor a historian, an engineer (Leuchter) was rejected because he was neither a chemist nor a historian, and a historian (Prof. Haverbeck) was rejected because he was neither a chemist nor an engineer." [23]

Rudolf concluded that the German legal system was corrupt and that an expert witness would need to simultaneously be an engineer, a chemist, a toxicologist, a historian and even a barrister. With this in mind, he set out to mock the current injustice in Germany by creating a person with all of these qualifications. Rudolf set to work on his first revisionist publication, a brochure entitled "Die Zeit lügt!" After discussions with the publisher, Karl Philipp, they decided to divide their "expert" author into four. The work was published in October 1992 under four pen names: Dipl.-Ing. Hans Karl Westphal, engineer; Dr. Werner Kretschmer, barrister, Dr. Christian Konrad, historian, Dr. Rainer Scholtz, chemist and pharmacologist. To this day, Rudolf is charged with dishonesty because of the use of these names and the "academic credentials" he attributed to them. [24]

By the Spring of 1992, Rudolf had prepared his expert report on the Auschwitz 'gas chambers' at the request of the legal defense of Otto Remer. While Rudolf was postponing any general publication of his work until he was awarded his PhD from the Max Planck Institute, Remer went ahead and published and distributed the work in early 1993. [25] As Rudolf found himself on a collision course with the German legal system, he opted to go further "underground" and continued his writings under various pen names. In early 1994, *Prof. Dr. Ernst Nolte: Auch Holocaust-Lügen haben kurze Beine* would be released under the pseudonym Manfred Köhler. Rudolf's own legal situation would be taken up in *Der Fall Rudolf* (The Rudolf Case) under the pseudonym Wilhelm Schlesiger.

With the newly fortified anti-revisionist laws passed in the autumn of 1994, Rudolf found himself dragged before the German legal system in a trial that lasted from late 1994 to mid-1995. As his trial was beginning, Rudolf had prepared yet another book for publication. Due to his current situation with the German courts, Rudolf decided to publish this new work, *Grundlagen zur Zeitgeschichte* (published in English as 'Dissecting the Holocaust') under a new pseudonym, Ernst Gauss. During the trial, German police raided Rudolf's home and found yet another work, the nearly complete, *Auschwitz: Nackte Fakten* (Auschwitz: Plain Facts) on his computer. [26] In *Auschwitz: Nackte Fakten*, Rudolf once again used two now-familiar pen names, Ernst Gauss and Manfred Köhler.

Rudolf's energy and the sheer volume of his efforts resulted in his later publications often citing his earlier works. Rudolf now found himself in the uncomfortable position of having one of his pen names citing another of his own secret identities. Although he clearly was forced into this situation by repressive laws targeting revisionist publications, Rudolf's detractors had a field day. Rudolf has been charged with every type of duplicity and intellectual dishonesty by those who seem content to turn a blind eye to the draconian legal system in which Rudolf found himself. Rudolf recently completed serving a prison sentence for publishing his expert report in Germany.

THE CURRENT CLIMATE

Today, revisionists find themselves in a world that is increasingly oppressive to their work. Anti-revisionist laws, far from achieving their stated purpose, now stifle free speech and expression and prevent a proper understanding of the Holocaust. In addition they attempt to control the thoughts of citizens through intimidation. Several revisionists sat in European prison cells including Germar Rudolf

and Ernst Zündel. British historian, David Irving recently served out 400 days in solitary confinement in Austria for comments he made in 1989.

Although some supporters of free speech have written articles and made statements denouncing the treatment of revisionists, most remain notably silent. So-called human rights organizations like Amnesty International refuse to defend or come to the aid of Holocaust revisionists.

Other organizations go beyond inactivity or silence to openly attacking freedom of speech when it comes to revisionists. Upon the release of David Irving from prison, Efraim Zuroff, the director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center's office in Israel said that the court's ruling was the "worst possible response to last week's Holocaust denial conference in Tehran and will only encourage those who support these mad ideas."[\[27\]](#)

In a recent fund-raising letter, the Anti-Defamation League, who claim to fight "to secure justice and fair treatment for all" addressed the recent Holocaust conference in Tehran. They wrote to their potential financial backers not only about the threat of Holocaust "denial," but of the need to monitor and track revisionists around the world:

"The conference clearly illustrates that hate is a global threat. To successfully fight it, we must challenge it wherever and whenever it appears. We need your support more than ever, to track and report on these racists. We need your support to expose their hateful agenda. We need your support to do everything possible to ensure that world leaders do not waver in their resolve against an increasingly dangerous Iran."[\[28\]](#)

Revisionists find themselves in an increasingly hostile environment. The news media has misrepresented their viewpoints and taken entirely to the use of the derogatory and misleading term "Holocaust deniers" to identify those who try to bring the Holocaust story into accord with the facts. Holocaust revisionists have been denounced by world leaders including: Tony Blair, Prime Minister of Britain; Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany; Ehud Olmert, Prime Minister of Israel; George Bush, President of the United States and even Kofi Annan, the United Nations Secretary General.[\[29\]](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE (AND THE PRESENT)

Revisionism has always been about correcting the historical record in the light of a more complete collection of historical facts.[\[30\]](#) Revisionists can be typified as being relentless in their pursuit of the truth even in light of overwhelming opposition. In a letter to dissident Israeli journalist Israel Shamir, Germar Rudolf described himself (a revisionist archetype) as follows:

"That's my personality: a contrarian with enormous will power, stubbornness, if need be [...] Pressure causes counter pressure. In this way I am a simple physical principle. Here is my human right to doubt, research, scrutinize, disagree, dispute, refute, challenge, question. [...] And that is the strongest motivation: Anybody who punishes me for merely exercising my human right of being a human = a creature able to doubt and explore, will meet my utmost unbreakable resistance. I won't allow anybody to reduce me to a submissive slave. Nobody."[\[31\]](#)

Rudolf writes, "Pressure causes counter pressure." With the extreme pressure currently being exerted against revisionists, their resolve is only strengthened. Revisionists have the right to doubt, to research, to challenge and to question just as anyone else does. The Holocaust is just like any other historical

event. It must be researched to arrive at the truth of what exactly did and what did not happen. It should not be protected by law.

The research, the publications, the debates, especially those on the Internet, must go on. The writers and thinkers who are currently in prison deserve the support of those who are currently free. While some are willing to stake their personal reputations and fortunes on this battle for truth, others are not. Neither position is wrong. For those who fear that they have too much to lose in this struggle, going "underground" is an acceptable and even valued strategy.

In his brief letter, Walter Lüftl wrote about bringing new converts to Holocaust revisionism. These new converts may only be able to survive in the 'catacombs.' If so, then why not? Revisionists may be forced underground into the 'catacombs' for the time being as a way to carry on our work and to fight for the freedom of those in European prison cells. As we consider the early persecution of Christians and the martyrs who perished in prison cells and for the amusement of Roman rulers in the bloody coliseum, we should also recall that Rome was unable to eliminate Christianity. The apostle John, no stranger to persecution, wrote in his gospel, "the truth will set you free."^[32] Revisionists will only be set free by the truth. Acceptance and understanding of the truth of the Holocaust will result in the repeal of Europe's anti-revisionist laws. The elimination of these hateful laws which strike at the means for one to be fully human will usher in a new time of freedom and a greater understanding among nations. These goals are well-worth the struggle. They warrant going underground for the time being, for they forecast our ultimate emergence from the dark of the 'catacombs' into the light and the mainstream of society and contemporary historical inquiry.

Notes:

- [1] Catacombs of Rome: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catacombs_of_Rome. Although typically thought of as a Christian invention, the use of catacombs as a burial place was also practiced by Jews of that historical period.
- [2] Justio L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Present Day*. Prince Press, Peabody Mass, 2005, p.95. Although it is admitted that the catacombs may have been used as hiding places on occasion, this was certainly not the principal reason for their creation nor was it their ultimate function.
- [3] Walter Lüftl, letter to the editor, *The Revisionist [TR]*, Vol. 2 No.3 (2004), p. 353. See also Germar Rudolf, *Lectures on the Holocaust*. Theses & Dissertations Press, Chicago, Ill, 2005, p. 130.
- [4] Ibid.
- [5] Arthur Butz, *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century: The Case Against the Presumed Extermination of European Jewry*, Institute for Historical Review, Torrance, Cal, 1985, pp. 11-12. Despite Ginsburg's attempt at anonymity he was beaten by a gang of Jewish thugs while visiting his wife's grave in an Israelite cemetery in Munich.

- [6] *The Myth of the Six Million* is today valuable only from the standpoint of the historiography of Holocaust revisionism. It should be understood that revisionism has advanced tremendously since this early publication. As early as 1977, Arthur Butz strongly critiqued this book and commented on its "many errors." See *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, p. 12.
- [7] David Hoggan earned his PhD in History from Harvard University in 1948. He later taught at several colleges and universities including Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), University of California (Berkeley), Carthage Lutheran College in Illinois, San Francisco State College and the Amerika Institute of the University of Munich.
- [8] Hoggan's manuscript was published in an unauthorized edition by Willis Carto's Noontide Press. The exact circumstances surrounding the attribution of this book to "anonymous" are unclear. Hoggan's book was recently reissued by Carto's Barnes Review Bookstore under the title *The Myth of the Six Million: An Examination of the Nazi Extermination Plot*. Additional details of the "discovery" and publication of the book by Carto are said to be included. This author has not read these details, but understands them to be suspect.
See: <http://www.barnesreview.org/books20041.htm>
- [9] Barbara Kulaszka ed., *Did Six Million Really Die? Report of the Evidence in the Canadian "False News" Trial of Ernst Zundel - 1988*. Samisdat Publishers Ltd., Toronto, 1992, p. 166.
- [10] Ibid., p. 187.
- [11] Ibid.
- [12] Ibid. p. 166.
- [13] Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust*, Penguin Books, New York, N.Y., p. 104. For Lipstadt, Holocaust "denial" is all about ulterior sinister motives and in the case of pseudonyms, hiding such motives.
- [14] Harry W. Mazal, "What's in a nym?": <http://www.holocaust-history.org/denial/nym.shtml>
- [15] Ibid.
- [16] Two high-profile examples include the cases of Wilhelm Stäglich and Fred Leuchter. Stäglich was stripped of his doctoral degree which he had earned at the University of Göttingen in 1951 for having written the book *Der Auschwitz Mythos*. Leuchter became unemployable in the engineering industry as well as within the prison system due to his report on the alleged execution gas chambers at Auschwitz, Birkenau and Majdanek. See: Is There Life after Persecution? at: http://www.ihr.org/jhr/v12/v12p429_Leuchter.html
- [17] Anonymous, "Ground Zero: The Criminalization of History." This article appears in *From the McCalden Files: Twenty Years of Revisionist Oppression*, Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust, Visalia, Cal, 1996, p.2.

- [18] Ibid, pp. 2-3.
- [19] Ernst Gauss (Germar Rudolf) ed., *Dissecting the Holocaust: The Growing Critique of 'Truth' and 'Memory.'* Theses & Dissertations Press, Capshaw, Ala, July 2000, p. 566.
- [20] A March 1982 report, "Making the Denial of the Holocaust a Crime in Law" by the Institute of Jewish Affairs in association with the World Jewish Congress called for the pan-European criminalization of revisionism. By the mid-1990s every proposal in this report had been successfully enacted or superseded by even more stringent anti-revisionist legislation.
- [21] Dan Gannon, "My 'Invasion' of the Computer Networks," *The Journal of Historical Review (JHR)* Vol. 15 No. 4, July / August 1995.
- [22] "Revisionist Global Computer Outreach," (*JHR*) Vol. 15, No. 4, July / August 1995.
- [23] Germar Rudolf, *The Rudolf Report: Expert Report on Chemical and Technical Aspects of the 'Gas Chambers' of Auschwitz.* Theses & Dissertations Press, Chicago, Ill, 2003, p. 338.
- [24] Ibid.
- [25] Ibid. For the entire story of the publication of *The Rudolf Report* and Rudolf's run-in with the German legal system, see *The Rudolf Report*, especially chapter 11, "Hunting Germar Rudolf."
- [26] Ibid. p. 344.
- [27] "Author to be released from prison," Baltimore Sun. December 21, 2006.
<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/nationworld/bal-te.hoot21dec21,0,3083828.story?track=rss>
- [28] Email fundraising letter in the possession of the author.
- [29] "Holocaust deniers meet, to outrage," *The Star Ledger*, December 13, 2006.
- [30] Harry Elmer Barnes, "Revisionism and the Promotion of Peace," included in the anthology *Barnes against the Blackout: Essays against Interventionism.* Institute for Historical Review, Costa Mesa, Cal., 1991. p. 273.
- [31] Letter from Germar Rudolf to Israel Shamir. Unpublished.
- [32] John 8:32, New International Version.

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